

**Kathmandu** -- The U.S. Embassy celebrated World AIDS Day with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and its partners in the fight against HIV/AIDS in Nepal through a program of informative games and interesting events designed to raise awareness and highlight key issues.

The activities took place on Friday, November 30, 2007 at the U.S. Embassy and included a 12 noon launch by Charge? d'Affaires Randy Berry, self-assessment exercises, de-stigmatizing educational games with surprise gifts for winners and active participants, a panel of experts engaging in discussion, as well as diverse multimedia displays including music videos, films and slide shows. Talented local artists also performed a street drama on HIV/AIDS awareness to conclude the activities.

"Our World AIDS Day program is designed to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS on the personal, community and national levels, as well as challenge us all to think about ways to help fight HIV/AIDS" said USAID Mission Director Beth Paige, "It is our intention to strengthen our efforts and highlight the issue of AIDS in Nepal and worldwide."

The World AIDS Day program represents an important educational initiative in support of USAID/Nepal's national HIV/AIDS awareness strategy, as well as a component in a renewed commitment to confront HIV in Nepal. USAID/Nepal's HIV program works with partners to support the Government of Nepal to implement the National HIV/AIDS Operation Plan and improve surveillance, prevention, testing, care and support.

USAID, along with partners UNICEF, Family Health International and the National Association of People living with HIV/AIDS in Nepal launched the Universal Access for Children Affected by AIDS in Nepal (UCAAN) partnership on November 29, committing to supporting the Government of Nepal in achieving universal access for children and their families to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

USAID/Nepal is hopeful that the opportunity that World AIDS Day represents will be used to place the issues of those affected by HIV/AIDS at the forefront and act as a catalyst to improving efforts to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS in Nepal.